

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

171514Z Sep 03

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001892

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [Z1](#) [MDC](#)

SUBJECT: MDC SECRETARY-GENERAL ON SADC OUTREACH, TALKS, AND
DAILY NEWS

REF: HARARE 1792

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton, under Sections 1.5(b)(d)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: MDC Secretary-General Welshman Ncube on September 16 reported to Ambassador Sullivan on meetings with selected SADC heads of state. He advised that the bishops troika remained active as an informal intermediary between MDC and ZANU-PF but that the ruling party continued to stall. Ncube said he planned to join MDC colleagues in a discreet negotiation workshop with Harvard Professor Roger Fisher September 29 - October 1. Ncube was critical of The Daily News management's strategy in battling the GOZ and concluded that, despite legal support for its continued operation, the paper may be fighting a losing battle. END SUMMARY.

SADC Outreach Continues

[12.](#) (C) In a September 16 meeting in his law office, MDC Secretary-General Welshman Ncube confirmed to Ambassador

SIPDIS

Sullivan Morgan Tsvangirai's report on Ncube's two and a half hour meeting on September 4 with Malawian President Muluzi (reftel). He stressed the Malawian leader's recognition of economic costs imposed on Malawi by Zimbabwe's crisis and of the difficulty of building regional momentum for pressure on the GOZ. Ncube went on to recount details of his meeting with Tanzanian President Mkapa. Unlike Muluzi, Mkapa did not have his Foreign Minister present for the meeting. Mkapa "listened more, spoke less" during the meeting, in which Ncube and Party Chairman Isaac Matongo essentially repeated their message to Muluzi. They did not begrudge SADC its stance on sanctions, but objected to the members' inattention to Zimbabwe's real problems. They urged Mkapa and his SADC colleagues to do more to encourage dialogue. Mkapa pledged to consult with SADC colleagues, including Mugabe, further based on the MDC presentation. Ncube advised that they were scheduled to meet with Mozambican President Chissano on September 18, with a trip to Botswana possibly to follow at some point.

Bishops' Initiative Continues

[13.](#) (C) Turning to the bishops' efforts to rejuvenate interparty talks, Ncube advised that the bishops had reported to MDC leaders last week on their meeting with ZANU-PF Chairman John Nkomo and party spokesman Nathan Shamuyarira. ZANU-PF interlocutors continued to refuse to offer in writing their input for an agenda, and instead requested that the bishops obtain from the MDC their answers to five questions: (1) Does MDC accept the legitimacy of the last national election? (2) Will MDC drop its call for sanctions? (3) Will the MDC become a "national party" free of foreign domination? (4) Will the MDC drop its election petition? (5) What is the view of a government of national unity? The ZANU-PF interlocutors refused the bishops' request that the questions be presented in writing. In response, the MDC leadership told the bishops they would not answer the questions in advance of talks, but would agree to have the questions included an agenda for formal talks.

[14.](#) (C) The bishops called on Nkomo again on September 15 at Nkomo's behest. They conveyed the MDC response to Nkomo, who belatedly had reduced the five questions to writing for the meeting. Nkomo told them that he had to consult further with ZANU-PF principals and would meet them again on September 22. Ncube concluded that such developments indicated that ZANU-PF remained sensitive to public appearances and did not want to be seen to scuttle efforts on talks, but that the party had yet to show seriousness about getting talks underway. He was aware of a ZANU-PF politburo resolution authorizing talks so he was confident that the separate Nkomo and Chinamasa channels represented a coordinated effort, not independent strands.

Harvard Workshop

15. (C) Ncube said he intended to join MDC colleagues on at an IRI-sponsored negotiating workshop being scheduled for September 29 - October 1 at a regional venue to be determined. The workshop would be run by a team headed by the group functioning under Harvard Professor Roger Fisher. According to Ncube, MDC hoped the workshop would enhance the cohesiveness and tactical awareness of the putative MDC negotiating team. He said MDC representatives had conveyed background on the local context to Fisher's group in a 45 minute phone conversation. Topics covered included inner party workings, likely negotiating issues, strategic objectives of each side.

The Daily News

16. (C) Putting on his lawyer's hat, Ncube briefly shared observations on The Daily News (TDN) shut-down. He attacked the judgment of TDN management in ignoring repeated legal advice to register the paper provisionally even as it attacked the registration requirement's constitutionality. The paper also seemed unprepared to register even when the Supreme Court decision September 10 made registration, on which its constitutional claim hinged, imperative. He noted that the reported Supreme Court decision did not state any legal consequences of the paper's failure to register other than its disqualification from pursuing its constitutional claim. It did not address whether the paper could operate and, by its terms, left open the possibility of examining the constitutional claim as soon as the paper registered.

17. (C) Ncube corroborated reports that South Africa's Vice President had called Mugabe to express concern on the matter. Mugabe professed to have been kept in the dark on plans to raid the paper and implied that the paper would be permitted to resume publication. In any event, existing law supported quick resumption of the paper's operation even as its legal battles continued, according to Ncube. Based on unequivocal GOZ statements and the police's seizure of publishing equipment, however, Ncube concluded that the GOZ intended to extinguish the paper's voice forever.

Comment

18. (C) The bishops' activity of late seems to have avoided publicity that impeded their earlier efforts. Of course, with the threatened demise of TDN, publicity over potentially meaningful political developments here is less likely to be a factor in anything. Indeed, the fate of TDN will speak volumes on the ruling party's obsession to stifle dissent notwithstanding its innumerable other crises and can be expected to cast a pall over prospects for meaningful talks.
SULLIVAN